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La causalité en histoire. M. SIMIAND. *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie,* July, 1906. Pp. 245-290.

At the session of the Société française de Philosophie held last May, M. Simiand advanced the thesis that in so far as historians seek at all to explain events, their explanations can not differ in any essential from those offered by the natural sciences, without thereby being convicted of insufficiency or error. They must start from the position that the *same causes must always produce the same effects.*

Selecting illustrations chiefly from Seignobos's 'Histoire politique de l'Europe contemporaine,' a work which he regards as more free than most from the faults he describes, M. Simiand shows that in many passages which profess to be explanatory there is merely the description of a gradual change; as though the historian supposed that by making the steps of advance many and minute he thereby explained, at least in part, the occurrence of that advance. In other instances the same cause is found productive of different effects. Particularly, individuals are cited as the causes of very different acts. But it is evident that in such cases there is a confusion of cause with condition. The true cause can not produce different effects.

An event is only explained when the causation which is offered in explanation is offered as a particular case of a general law. But if we attempt to subsume the explanations offered by historians under general laws, we often find it impossible.

M. Simiand then offered the following rules to govern all historians in their explanations of events. First, define in general terms the precise effect for which an explanation is to be offered. Second, to distinguish the cause from the condition, observe that among the different antecedents of a phenomenon, that one is the cause which can be bound to it by the most general relation. For example, an explosion is *caused* by a sudden expansion of gas, that being the antecedent of *all* explosions; whereas the spark might be replaced by a shock, the powder by dynamite, etc. As corollaries of the last rule, we have: that the cause should be the *immediate* antecedent; and that the effect can have no other cause save that offered in explanation—the explanation will be reciprocal. These rules will result in eliminating 'explanations' that are mere descriptions of evolution; individuals should no more be cited as causes of events; and finally, neither imitation nor the purposes of men will be regarded as causes, nor, indeed, any general psychological factors, such as instincts and impulses.

The discussion that followed served to bring out M. Simiand's point, that he by no means asserted it to be the primary function of the historian to explain events. But in so far as he does offer explanations they must be of the same type as those of natural science. His contention that there is an unnecessary lack of accuracy, that explanations are offered by modern historians which are no explanations, was not opposed. And the reforms he recommended in method received tentative endorsement from M. Lacombe and others, except as regards the explanatory value of such general psychological factors as those above cited.

M. Rauh, however, urged that scientific explanations are not all of one type. And here, it seems to me, lies the weakness of M. Simiand's position. Every event takes place, both as a particular case of a general law and as a part of a totality. From this distinction result two types of explanation, which may be indicated by such terms as momentum and direction, action and movement, formal and final, mechanical and teleological. It has been urged that no science is free from both types of explanation. The contention may be wrong, but certainly we are not in a position to ignore it, as M. Simiand would ignore it, particularly in the realm of history, where, if anywhere, the distinction is valid. Perhaps the real purport of his paper is to limit the use of the term explanation. In that case his statement is liable to serious misunderstanding; for it seems a perversion of terms to say, as he does, that an explosion is explained by the expansive power of gases, but is not explained by the motives of the man that puts match to powder. While his paper may well promote precision in offering general explanations of particular events, it is not likely to persuade historians that general explanations are the only ones they may offer.

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La méthode de Descartes. A. HANNEQUIN. *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale,* November, 1906. Pp. 755–774.

This paper is an unfinished first chapter of a projected work on Descartes, which the talented author had been preparing for some years, the work having been repeatedly interrupted by the ravages of the disease that caused his untimely death last summer, July 5, 1906. The editor of the *Revue* expresses his appreciation of the young philosopher's promise and worth in a foot-note to the article here reviewed, and also publishes, in the same number, another fragment by him, on the philosophy of Leibniz, which was also to have introduced a projected work.

The revolution which Descartes accomplished in philosophy was a necessary consequence of the revolution which Galileo had brought about in science. If the experimental method is specially characteristic of modern science, this is but the result of the need first voiced by Descartes, but felt by all investigators of rank, the need, namely, of applying mathematics universally to the solution of scientific problems. Descartes placed himself at the center of this new view of things, and developed a theory of knowledge that for the first time clearly exhibited the true relation between thought and things, giving to mathematics the supreme methodological position it deserves.

The *Regulæ* of Descartes contain the first exposition of this method, and constitute, in the opinion of Hannequin, the most valuable source for the understanding of its nature. To reach knowledge, or certainty, which are convertible terms, the human mind avails itself of only one method.